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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

*Chivers*

National Intelligence Council

18 May 1984  
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### GUIDANCE FOR AG INITIATES CONCERNING THE ESTIMATES BUSINESS

There follow a number of maxims for your guidance. I'm sure I list too many.\* Even so, you will find that heeding the following will lead you on to fame and fortune as an AG estimates officer.

1. Keep constantly in mind that estimates encounter very heavy competition for the time and attention of our senior policymaking consumers.

- The very people at whom we're aiming are the ones who have the least time and energy to absorb our wisdom. They feel they do not need us. They carry their own NIEs around in their heads.
- This applies in particular to soft subjects where evidence is thin and ambiguous -- and, within these categories, especially to those subjects which are best known generally. What did Al Haig think he needed to learn from us about NATO? Or, Richard Pipes about the nature of Soviet Communism? Or, Henry Kissinger about anything?
- Dispassionate estimates have heavy going, too, because they are eternally up against advocacy in the marketplace. Policy advocacy is almost always much simpler, more appealing, more seductive, more flattering, and ofttimes deceiving.

\* Wilson was satisfied with 14, Moses with ten, Lenin with three. This present batch has many more, and not listed in any particular order of priority.

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- Polls of policymaking consumers indicate that estimates do not enjoy a particular welcome among them. With some notable exceptions, many estimates tend to be looked on as old hat, ho-hum, too general, too watered down, etc.
- We must keep in mind that the formal NIEs, etc. are only one part of the intelligence being supplied to policymakers: not only basic and current data, but other estimative judgments being conveyed by NIOs and others, informally and face-to-face.
- And, we must keep in mind that all of intelligence is only one input to policy, where it competes with numerous other, potent influences at work upon senior policymakers.
- All this means that estimates have to be damn good -- in timeliness, relevance, unique contribution, quality, and usefulness -- to make any substantial impact. Decided progress has been made in the past few years in improving estimative performance, substantively and procedurally, but estimates still finish a poor third -- in the regard policymakers have for intelligence -- behind facts and current intelligence. We still have a long way to go.

2. This means that you have a big job in front of you: to fashion estimates of such utility that they will make constructive impact on the tough audience we face -- and so justify the time, talent, energy, and money spent on their preparation.

3. What can good national estimating offer?

- Fierce independence of judgment, free from policy preference, preconceptions, or operational bias. This certainly is a prime contribution which estimates can and must make -- and which the consumers will not find elsewhere.
- Thoroughness, perspective, wisdom, understanding, unique insights not obtainable in Washington's constant hurly-burly concentration on the immediate.
- A sense of the major forces and trends at work in given situations.
- A sense of which of those forces/trends are more-or-less inexorable, and which others may be amenable to US or other outside influence or remedy.
- Long or intermediate-range warning of things that may go bump in the night. Not so much tactical warning, but alerts to the policymakers of what's brewing beyond the particular crises of the day with which he/she is always absorbed.

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- Often a good sense of the consequences of this or that world development, whether or not the near-term likelihood is high.
- Estimates officers don't make policy, but we must not be shy in pointing up those handles that may exist for US policymakers in this and that situation in the world. Also, estimates can be so written that they evoke "aha!" ideas among the particularly perceptive of the policymaking readers.

4. Things particularly to avoid:

- a. Writing about trees, rather than forests.
- b. Assembling facts, rather than their so-what.
- c. Contradiction, ambiguity, redundancy, and wish-wash.
- d. Serving your preconceptions, rather than going where the evidence takes you.
- e. Leaving the reader unclear -- from the very outset of your estimative piece -- about what the central messages are you are communicating, why they deserve his/her time, and what they can do for him/her. The key payoff in AG analysis and writing is an estimate's Key Judgments: Spend whatever time it takes to produce the essence of what your paper's message is -- in as crisp, clear, strong, and so-what manner as you can. Our principal consumers will at best generally read only the KJ's. And if we do a poor or cloudy job of composing them, those consumers' staffers will write up their own -- which may or may not convey the message and tone you intend.
- f. Defending yesterday's judgments automatically and passionately.
- g. Inattention to new evidence which not be congenial to you because it modifies or negates your judgment or commitment of yesterday.
- h. Writing about Ruritania as if it were floating free in a void in which US policy and presence did not exist. Make every effort to know the US Blue side, and keep it in mind in forecasting Ruritania's future.
- i. Sticking close to your desks and never going to sea. Get out and around -- into the intelligence, policymaking, and academic communities.
- j. Reading every cable and in-box classified item, to the detriment of thorough attention to the best available unclassified materials: e.g., FBIS; speeches; major journal articles, foreign and

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domestic; and the best of media and academic thought available, US and foreign. This guidance applies particularly to the softer subjects. The record: many of the best, most sophisticated estimates officers began careers in FBIS analysis -- where they were often ahead of the curve in discerning important changes in the world scene.

k. Estimative consensus. Our keynote is not consensus, but accuracy (as best we can discern it), and sharp exposition thereof. In coordination meetings avoid sic tyrannus non carborundum like the plague. We serve the consumers far better by stating our theses clearly, and letting the dissenters dissent rather than succeed in muddying up the message.

5. Keep in mind that intelligence and policymaking do not, in fact, interact in a rational, orderly manner.

- "Policy" is often made sloppily, in a great hurry, or -- as Churchill is supposed to have said, "the making of foreign policy, like that of making sausage, is a process better not observed closely."
- The impact of estimates varies greatly: sometimes central, sometimes not at all, sometimes at the margins.
- Estimates are often most useful where particular policymakers can use them for particular personal or policy purposes, or where the estimates buttress their own policy predilections or commitments.
- Conversely, estimates will be ignored or criticized where their messages are not congenial to policymakers. This is an occupational hazard. Hang in there. Keep telling it like it is. And, ultimately, events will either prove you wrong or validate your insight, and in any event will in due time bring another Administration into office -- whose foreign policy preconceptions and hubris will be as pronounced, however different their character, from those with which you have been tilting.

6. You and the NIOs.

- The NIOs and the D/AG first discuss estimates assignments, then D/AG and DD/AG will negotiate these with you -- seeking always to find the best substantive matchups.
- NIOs have no authority on their own to sign you up on anything. If so approached, refer them to D/AG, and check with D/AG or DD/AG.
- Once you have become an estimate's drafter, this means that you will be the principal producer of that project throughout the entire process. See procedure papers (in this Bible) for detailed guidance re all the steps, memos, routings, etc., necessary.

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- On interagency estimates the NIO is the officer responsible to the DCI for the content, message, format, and presentation of the piece. As such, he/she has the principal substantive call.
- In most cases your own substantive judgment and those of the NIOs will be fairly similar. Stick to your guns if you feel an NIO is off. If there are differences between you of any magnitude, enlist D/AG's assistance.
- At coordination meetings you are not only usually the keeper of the formal text, but are expected to weigh in persuasively in debate, to offer advice to the NIO (sotto voce) on language and on where to stick with the text, and to compose text on the spot (or during lunch breaks) -- new language that is, which will preserve the text's message and integrity.
- You go to NFIB with the NIO, prepared to handle any last-moment detailia or hot grounders which may arise.
- Your responsibilities as drafter do not end with NFIB. You will need to finish up with any maps or graphics you have earlier instituted (and, generally, the more the better), to negotiate distribution lists, to proof-read, and where applicable to prepare and negotiate appropriate versions of the estimate for release to liaison. Check the guidance papers in this Bible and/or check with

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## 7. Writing estimates:

- Check with DD/AG and D/AG before you submit your first draft of a terms of reference or an estimate to an NIO or anyone else outside the AG.
- Once DD/AG and D/AG have OK'd your sending early drafts of estimates out for comment, be sure in every case to give copies to the NIO Chairman, any other appropriate NIOs (in the case of broad subject matter papers), D/AG, DD/AG, and appropriate specialists in the DDI. Later drafts will go to VC/NIC
- In the case of interagency estimates, pay first heed to the reactions you get from the paper's NIO chairman; and, secondly, from D/AG and others.
- Please inform DD/AG, early on, if you encounter or expect any serious differences of judgment on the part of DDI or other specialists.
- In cases of any in-house (not interagency) studies you may prepare, proceed and distribute as above, but here pay first heed to the reactions of D/AG and DD/AG, to NIOs and others secondarily.

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- In addition to your given assignments, always keep brooding independently about world developments, and do not hesitate to recommend to DD/AG and D/AG that this or that estimative study be initiated, or this or that procedure improved.
- Good luck

  
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